

OP-EDS

# TIME TO DROP HAMILTON'S ECONOMICS

JULY 4, 2020 | JOEL SCHLOSBERG | 1 COMMENT

THE WASHINGTON TIMES, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1917.

## GEORGE ARLISS in "ALEXANDER HAMILTON" — NOW AT THE — NEW NATIONAL THEATER

### GEORGE ARLISS

A Great and Serious Actor in a Most Important Play  
One of America's Great Men and Statesmen  
Written Into a Play of High Dramatic Power

*The story of a marvelous life, a tragic death, entwined with the history of this nation, its Constitution, its great George Washington.*

*The story that underlies America's power. This play combines marvelous acting, intense dramatic interest, with highest educational value.*

When the publication of this page announcement was ordered by A. L. Erlanger, of *Klaw & Erlanger*, Mr. Erlanger was asked, "What shall we say about this play in the advertisement?" Here is the reply:

**By A. L. Erlanger**

Tell the public something about the able actor, not too much, the public knows him.

Print boldly the picture of the great actor who is your star. Show the world the face of the man who is to interpret the character of Hamilton.

Then, so forcefully as you can, tell about ALEXANDER HAMILTON, the American giant whom Arliss brings to life and puts before the public on the stage today—a great service in education.

Alexander Hamilton, with the help of fate, chose his parents wisely. His father was a Scotchman; his mother was a French Huguenot.

He was vain of his ancestry, called his country place "The Grange," braggart of his blood, and through aristocratic vanity fought the duel in which he was killed.

The harmless ancestral vanity of Hamilton was useful to his country. It made him think himself superior, filled with greatness and established power. His counsel gave to the country what it needed, the strong hand of conservatism.

Galant the historian said that Hamilton put into the Constitution of the United States ORDER, FORCE, and DURABLE. Others have said that he tried to make it too cautious—in the effort to govern after his death.

serve, study, and associate with superior men. Because he knew that, Hugh Knox educated him.

And because he knew that, George Washington made him his private secretary. That does not happen to young men who make pool rooms their specialty.

Hamilton studying, working to the hour of his premature death, had his hand in everything; in war, a brave fighter and capable commander.

And in politics and statesmanship a great leader.

He taught this country in its infancy that a nation cannot have thirteen different heads. There must be one head, and the head must do the thinking, planning, and ordering.

We are getting a one-headed government in this country, and freeing ourselves from the notion that the United States should travel in forty-eight different directions at once, and we owe it to the early work of Alexander Hamilton, whose character and power Arliss portrays so marvelously in his great play.

Strange are the follies of the human mind. And strange the endings of many great men—of a Napoleon, landed on St. Helena by excessive ambition, or an Alexander Hamilton, killed in a foolish duel through excessive vanity.

Hamilton, who refused the office of Chief Justice of the United States because he did not look for honor, but preferred hard work, could not resist the invitation of the Blackguard Aaron Burr, who challenged Hamilton to a duel, because he wanted to kill him and get rid of him.

Poor Hamilton, who had boasted of his blood "as proud and high as that of any," thought that he must prove his aristocracy by allowing himself to be



GEORGE ARLISS AS ALEXANDER HAMILTON

Review of that other Broadway play about Hamilton in *The Washington Times*, September 10, 1917. Public domain.

The July 3 premiere of *Hamilton* on streaming service Disney+ marked the end of a five-year wait for audiences who hadn't seen the hit musical on stage.

Alexander Hamilton's rivals in *Hamilton* concede that he "doesn't get enough credit for all the credit he gave us." To the contrary, as Voltairine de Cleyre noted a century ago, Hamilton "devised a financial sys-

tem of which we are the unlucky heritors,” an economic order designed “to puzzle the people and make public finance obscure to those that paid for it.”

Broadway stage performance might seem a retrograde medium for the likes of *Hamilton* and *The Book of Mormon* during the decade when web media went mainstream. To the latter’s co-creator Matt Stone, this merely shows that “if you tell good stories, the platforms are sort of beside the point. We made the most analog thing you can think of, a play at the Eugene O’Neill Theater, and it worked out as well as anything we have ever done.” But as Paul Goodman noted in *People or Personnel*, the capital-intensive, high-risk nature of Broadway (or Off Broadway aspiring to move off Off) “powerfully influences the choice of plays and style of acting and production.”

Skyrocketing rents in and around the Broadway theater district in midtown New York City — with access to real estate depending on political favors rather than business skill — restrict the space available to fresh talent. A production like *Beetlejuice* which reliably draws devoted crowds can be shuttered due to lack of available theater space. The Drama Book Shop, the space where *Hamilton*’s Lin-Manuel Miranda penned his previous Broadway show, *In the Heights*, was set to close until Miranda personally bailed it out.

For the fortunate shows that make it to Broadway, it can be lucrative to stay there. In the realm of what Goodman calls “un-free enterprise,” restricting supply reaps the benefit of stoked demand without the pressures of competition (while clamping the release valves of legal loopholes or ticket resellers). COVID-era theater shutdowns moved the filmed *Hamilton* premiere to the Internet instead of movie theaters. If the benefits of withholding had not been artificially inflated, it might have long been viewable via live broadcasting (*a la* the Metropolitan Opera’s productions since 2006), research collections like the New York Public Library’s Theatre on Film and Tape Archive, or DVDs.

*Hamilton* arrives on an Internet video landscape well on its way to consolidation. Like Marvel Comics antagonist Galactus, compelled to continually devour entire worlds to survive, Disney has absorbed Pixar, Star Wars, the Muppets, Marvel itself, and even major-studio equal Fox into its vault. Those collections make it to home viewing missing words (including an expletive cut from *Hamilton*), visuals, or even entire episodes.

As de Cleyre understood, the creativity restricted by Hamiltonianism can best be unleashed by “the voluntary association of those interested in the management of matters of common concern, without coercion of the uninterested or the opposed.”

*New Yorker* Joel Schlosberg is a contributing editor at The William Lloyd Garrison Center for Libertarian Advocacy Journalism.

## PUBLICATION/CITATION HISTORY

- “Time to Drop Hamilton’s Economics,” by Joel Schlosberg, *River Cities’ Reader* [Davenport, Iowa], 07/06/20
- “Time to drop Hamilton’s economics,” by Joel Schlosberg, *Heartland Newsfeed* [Nokomis, IL], 07/06/20
- “‘All the Credit He Gave Us:’ Time to Drop Hamilton’s Economics,” by Joel Schlosberg, *CounterPunch*, 07/08/20
- “‘All the Credit He Gave Us:’ Time to Drop Hamilton’s Economics,” by Joel Schlosberg, *Radio Free*, 07/08/20
- “Time to drop Hamilton’s economics,” by Joel Schlosberg, *Creston, Iowa News Advertiser*, 02/05/19
- “Time to drop Hamilton’s economics,” by Joel Schlosberg, *Glendale, Arizona Star* (both web and [print](#)), 07/09/20
- “Time to Drop Hamilton’s Economics,” by Joel Schlosberg, *Ventura County, California Citizens Journal*, 07/12/20